

On March 17, 2009, Rep. Slaughter introduced HR 1549, The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act ([PAMTA](#)) in the House of Representatives. This critical legislation is designed to ensure that we preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for the treatment of human diseases.

- [Background: The need for PAMTA](#)
- [Summary of PAMTA: What does it do?](#)
- [Organizations endorsing PAMTA](#)
- [Recent action on PAMTA](#)

Background

Antibiotics are an indispensable part of modern medicine, protecting all of us from deadly infections. Unfortunately, over the past several years, the widespread practice of using antibiotics to promote livestock growth and compensate for unsanitary, crowded conditions has led to the emergence of antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria and other germs, rendering many of our most powerful drugs ineffective. PAMTA will limit the use of antibiotics on our livestock to ensure that we are not inadvertently creating antibiotic-resistant diseases that we can't fight with modern medicine.

According to estimates by the Union of Concerned Scientists, 50 million pounds of antibiotics - nearly 70 percent of all antibiotics sold in the U.S. - have been used in food animals for purposes other than treating disease.

Resistant pathogens travel from humans to animals via food handling, food consumption, animal handling, as well as through soil and water contamination.

Indeed, there is compelling evidence that the widespread usage of antibiotics in agriculture has diminished the effectiveness of antibiotics in human medicine.

A 2002 analysis of more than 500 scientific articles and published in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*

found that "many lines of evidence link antimicrobial resistant human infections to foodborne pathogens of animal origin."

The Institute of Medicine's 2003 report on *Microbial Threats to Health* concluded "Clearly, a decrease in the inappropriate use of antimicrobials in human medicine alone is not enough. Substantial efforts must be made to decrease inappropriate overuse in animals and agriculture as well."

When we go to the grocery store to pick up dinner, we should be able to buy our food without worrying that eating it will expose our family to potentially deadly bacteria that will no longer respond to our medical treatments.

Antibiotic resistant bacterial infections increase health care costs by over \$20 billion each year and increase societal costs by \$35 billion. Two million Americans acquire a bacterial infection during their hospital stay every year, and 70 percent of their infections will be resistant to the drugs commonly used to treat them. As a result, every day thirty-eight patients in our hospitals will die of those infections.

We cannot stand by while our life-saving antibiotics become obsolete. A *National Academy of Sciences* report states that, "a decrease in antimicrobial use in human medicine alone will have little effect on the current situation. Substantial efforts must be made to decrease inappropriate overuse in animals and agriculture as well."

Summary of PAMTA

The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act would:

- Phase out the non-therapeutic use of antibiotics in livestock of medically important antibiotics;
- Require this same tough standard of review for new applications for approval of animal antibiotics;
- Does not restrict use of antibiotics to treat sick animals or to treat pets and other animals not used for food.

Organizations endorsing PAMTA

Over 300 organizations representing health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane and other interests including the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, and the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, have supported enactment of legislation to phase out non-therapeutic use medically important antibiotics in farm animals.

Action during the 111th Session of Congress

During the 111th Session of Congress, PAMTA gained enormous momentum. On July 13, 2009, Congresswoman Slaughter chaired a Rules Committee hearing on the legislation. Following this hearing, the Energy and Commerce Committee held [several hearings](#) on antibiotic resistance. Congresswoman Slaughter submitted [testimony](#) to the Energy and Commerce Committee on HR 1549, the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act.

Likewise, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has demonstrated its heightened concern with antibiotic usage in agriculture by releasing guidance that recommended the end of the use of antibiotics for growth promotion ([download guidance](#)). While the FDA's recommendation is a step in the right direction, it is not strong enough to protect the health of American families. Representative Slaughter, together with several of her colleagues submitted comments on this guidance calling for strong regulations to be issued (

[download comments](#)

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Rep. Slaughter looks forward to working with the over one hundred cosponsors of this important legislation to ensure its speedy passage into law.